

free from cholera therefore foul drains are harmless, is, when examined, so transparently absurd, that Mr. P'Anson may well be thanked for stirring the nonsense, instead of leaving it in the cesspools of some skulls to work its mischief unobserved.

Mail-coach guards are a bright-complexioned, cheery-looking set of men: *argal*, no one can be hurt by being exposed, during any night in the winter, to frost, snow, hail, or rain!

Brighton bathing-machine men stand for hours in the day either in the water or in wet clothes: *argal*, it is absurd for the nursery-maids and children to keep dry on the chum pier!

The five-and-twenty members of the Pig and Whistle Club sit every night in the back parlour, smoking their pipes very comfortably: *argal*, tobacco-smoke and spittoons would not make ladies sick in a drawing-room in Belgrave!

Ballast-heavers on the Thames keep up their strength for some years on four gallons of bad porter and a quart of gin a day: *argal*, that is the proper tippie for the young ladies at the boarding-schools at Brompton!

Some asthmatic persons breathe most comfortably in a smoky room: *argal*, Dr. Reid ought to make all the flues of the parliamentary chimneys discharge their smoke into the Houses of Lords and Commons!

Here are a few samples of the Nightman-Fallacy, or the Fallacia Cloacina (not) of Aldrich or Whately.

What do the maintainers of that fallacy say to M. Poitevin's manure manufactory near the London Hospital?

"Dead dog smells like musk," but only "when at a distance."—I am, Sir, &c.

January 6.

N. R.

TOWER BUILDINGS, LIVERPOOL, AND THE "COMPANION TO THE ALMANAC."

SIR,—Permit me, through the medium of your valuable columns, to offer a word of explanation in reference to a critique which appears in the "Companion to the Almanac for 1848." The author of the article on "Public Improvements" has honoured with his notice two works of mine in Liverpool during the past year, the Crescent Schools and the Tower Buildings. Of the general tone of the criticisms I have no cause of complaint; but in reference to the latter erection there are a few observations which, without explanation, would exhibit both myself and the building in question in rather an *eccentric* point of view. The writer proceeds as follows:—"One compartment of the main elevation is attached to the tower, in a more singular than accountable manner, as it makes a break and juts out forward, so as not only to abridge, but also to destroy the regularity of composition that might else have been maintained, because, what is exclusive of the tower would then have shewn seven windows on a floor, while the entrance-door beneath the centre window would have been in accordance with the rules of architectural composition; whereas, now there is no central feature at all, the entrance—and it is markedly distinguished from the other openings on the ground-floor—coming beneath the second window from the part which is made to project forward, so that it has only one window on that side of it, and four on the other, whereas it ought to have been in the centre, and to have had three on each side of it," &c. I am here represented as having, without any assignable cause, distorted the façade of the building, by placing the entrance out of the centre, and making a projection or break in the compartment attached to the tower. "in a manner more singular than accountable." Now, I am no more in love with distortion or eccentricity than my friendly critic can be, and would very much have preferred the suppression of both these objectionable features. The explanation of them, however, is exceedingly simple. Tower Buildings are erected on an ancient site irregular in plan, one part of the irregularity consisting of the projecting break alluded to. I was required to cover the whole area as it previously existed, the proprietor not being willing to lose any of the space, which is extremely valuable. The

projection, therefore, however singular it may appear, is no longer unaccountable. The situation of the entrance-door is dictated by the necessities of the locality, and could not, with due regard to the uses of the building, have been placed elsewhere. Whether, labouring under these necessities, the features alluded to could have been better treated than they are, is matter of fair criticism; but let me not be held up as so enamoured of the *bizarre* and *outré*, as wilfully and designedly to disregard all attention to symmetry. One glance at the ground plan, or five minutes' inspection of the "*locus in quo*," would have satisfactorily shewn what I have stated above.

It is cause for regret that the author of the architectural criticisms in the "Companion to the Almanac" has not, in all cases, the opportunity of actual inspection of the works commented on; since, able as he is, misapprehensions and erroneous impressions are otherwise almost certain in many cases to occur.—I am, Sir, &c., J. A. PICTON.

Liverpool, Jan. 3, 1848.

PUBLIC COMPETITIONS.

SIR,—Much as has been said both in your own journal and elsewhere on the subject of competition, it is one that cannot be brought forward too frequently, or insisted upon too strenuously. Reforms of corrupt systems are not to be carried by a *coup-de-main*, but must be brought about by a perseveringly maintained attack and exposure of abuses, without which a mere occasional outcry is mere child's play. Notwithstanding the malpractices complained of by individuals, from time to time, either the majority of the profession must find their account in the present system of competition, or else those who keep aloof from competition are quite indifferent to the various hardships and injustice to which, as now managed, it exposes those who enter into it. Some, indeed, decry competition altogether, and seem disposed to do away with it entirely; which would be very much to be regretted, because,—to quote what has just been said by a contemporary of yours, in speaking of the Army and Navy Club-house competition,—"it prevents the monopoly of employment by a favoured few, neutralizes the prestige of names, and opens the door to talent, which might ever else remain in obscurity. The excellence of the principle is quite distinct from the abuses which are suffered to interfere with it in practice."

There is every reason to believe that, had it not been for a public competition, the Houses of Parliament would not have proved so worthy a structure by many degrees as it now is, or eventually will be; it being more likely than not that the work would have been confided to some one else than Mr. Barry. Had there been, in like manner, a competition for the British Museum and the alterations at Buckingham Palace, the probability is that we should in both instances have had something far more satisfactory than what we have now got.

At no very great distance of time, perhaps, a noble opportunity for the exercise of their talents will be afforded to the profession, since it may be presumed that the anticipated new National Gallery will be made the subject of a public competition. Should such prove the case, it is to be hoped that it will be better managed than any thing of the kind has hitherto been. The most ample time should, in the first place, be allowed for the preparation of designs; whereas in general no time at all is afforded for properly studying the subject proposed, sometimes barely enough for getting up a set of drawings, so that the very first idea which presents itself must be abided by, and the finished drawings amount to no more than a finished sketch. In the next place, there ought to be a public exhibition beforehand of all the designs, and not such a brief one as to be little better than a nominal exhibition, but kept open for several months, so as to allow time for repeated and leisurely examination. This would be one very great step towards an improved system of competition, and would of itself go far towards remedying much that is now justly complained of. Leaving to THE

BUILDER to enlarge upon the subject.

I am, Sir, &c., PHIL-AGOROS.

HISTORY AND ARRANGEMENT OF LIGHTHOUSES.

At the Society of Arts, on the 15th ult., a paper by Mr. A. G. Findlay was read, "On the various descriptions of lighthouses, beacons, and light vessels, and the methods and materials used in their construction from the period of their introduction to the present time; also on the systems of illuminations used in lighthouses, and the improvements which have recently taken place."

Mr. Findlay commenced his paper by alluding to the vast importance to a maritime nation like England of having a durable and efficient mode of constructing and illuminating lighthouses, light vessels, &c., and proceeded to point out the general uses of lighthouses. The oldest structure upon record is the celebrated Pharos, of Alexandria; this served as a guide to ancient mariners during a period of nearly 1,600 years. Pliny says, "it was square, of white stone, and consisting of many stories, and diminished upwards, till it attained the height of 347 feet." The most ancient structure known to exist in this country is the Roman Pharos, at Dover Castle, and this would still answer its intended purpose, after a lapse of eighteen centuries. The celebrated Cordovan Tower, in the Bay of Biscay, is another instance of stability, having been built in 1611. The Eddystone Lighthouse has attracted more of the attention of the public than perhaps any other; the first of the edifices was of wood, and built by Mr. Winstanley, in the years 1696-8, but owing to the sea washing over the lantern, it was soon raised to 120 feet in height. In November, 1703, the whole structure was washed away; in 1706 sanction was obtained for its being rebuilt, which was accordingly done by Rudyerd; and in 1755 it was destroyed by fire. The present tower, one of the artificial wonders of England, built by Smeaton, is 100 feet high, and has given good proof of its capability of resisting the force of the waves.

The Bell Rock Lighthouse is a similar structure to the Eddystone; it was built by Stevenson, and cost 60,000*l*. The most recent erection of this description is on the Skerryvore Rock, and cost 90,700*l*. in its erection.

The author next alluded to the difficulty of constructing permanent lighthouses in exposed situations, and the advantages of them over floating lights, as well as the much smaller annual expenditure required, in order to maintain an efficient light. The first floating light was the well-known Nore-light vessel, moored in 1734. In order to ensure stability in a lighthouse, he stated that it is necessary that the structure should be capable of affording resistance to a pressure of not less than 6,000 lbs. to each square foot of surface exposed to the action of waves; this assertion was founded on experiments by Mr. Alan Stevenson, who ascertained and registered the force of the waves at the Skerryvore Rock on the 25th March, 1845, during a westerly gale, when it was found to be 6,083 lbs. per square foot; this, the greatest force hitherto registered, was cited, with many others. He next proceeded to point out the inapplicability of iron to the construction of lighthouses, where the metal would be immersed in the sea-water, which has the effect of reducing it to a body similar in its chemical properties to black-lead, and instanced the effects produced on a cannon ball taken from the *Mary Rose*, after having been sunk off Spithead for a period of 150 years; the iron shot, upon being exposed to the air, gradually became red hot, and then fell into a red powder resembling burnt clay. The author then described the methods which have been suggested for overcoming the difficulty of exposing large surfaces to the action of the force of the waves, and also of obtaining a firmer foundation on a sand, and especially Mr. Alexander Mitchell's screw-pile lighthouse, erected on the Maplin Sand, and Dr. Pont's method of driving piles by atmospheric pressure, as applied at the South Calisher Beacon on the Goodwin Sands, in 1847, and of other beacons on various shoals at the mouth of the Thames, as on the Blith Sand and on the shingles in the Prince's Channel. Another plan for the erection of lighthouses has been carried into effect at the point of Ayr, by Mr. Walker: it consists of constructing hollow cylinders, which are filled with concrete and